

CASE STUDY: LISTERIOSIS BY CHEESE CONSUMPTION IN SPAIN

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INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

At the beginning of 2018, the shocking case of a child being hospitalized for meningitis due to *Listeria monocytogenes* surfaced in Spain.

- To analyze this case of listeriosis in order to discuss the possible origins.
- To discuss the veterinary work in terms of prevention and mitigation of a health alert, from both fronts, the public administration and the company.

OHIAN TXIKI KOOP

The company Ohian Txiki Koop, located in the Basque Country, was involved in a food alert when the child affected by meningitis was associated with their soft sheep cheeses.

These products were distributed throughout Spain and even Portugal. Consumers were advised to refrain from using them via the press and all affected lots were removed from the market. The child evolved favorably.

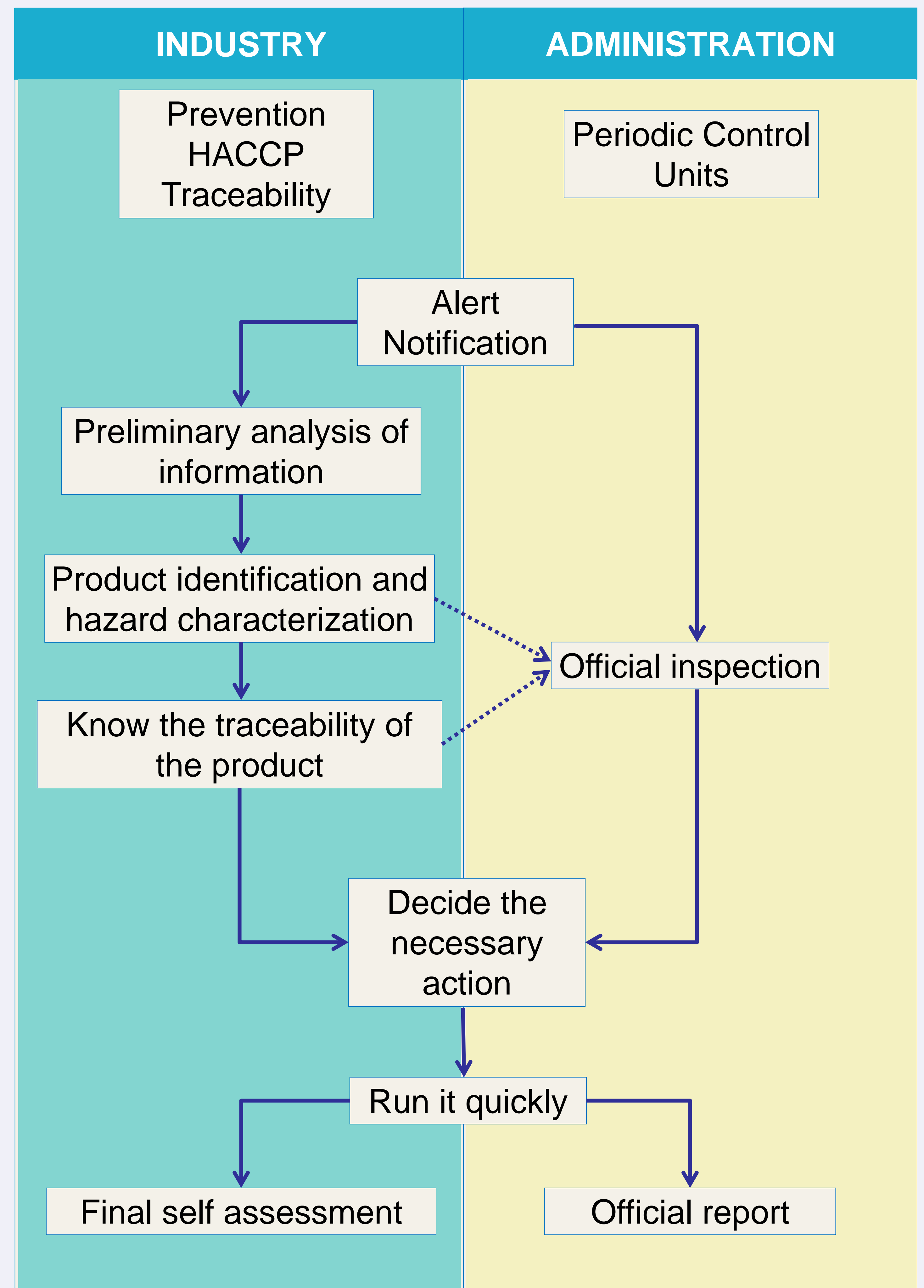
LISTERIA MONOCYTOGENES

Listeria monocytogenes is an anaerobic, gram positive and mobile intracellular bacterium. It is widely distributed in the environment, mainly in soils. The infection by this bacterium is known as listeriosis and can present as a moderate gastroenteritis or as a sepsis of high mortality.

The outbreaks caused by *Listeria* are difficult to control because it can grow in low moisture foods, high salinity and even at refrigeration temperatures, which is extremely worrying in “ready-to-eat” products. In addition, its window period can take up to 70 days, which makes it difficult to associate it with contaminated food.

In 2010, it was estimated that, *Listeria monocytogenes* caused 23,150 illness cases and 5,463 deaths worldwide. Most cases occurred in patients older than 65 years.

The risk of contracting listeriosis is higher when consuming unpasteurized cheese, since milk may be contaminated with *Listeria* from the farm. However, pasteurized cheeses are not free of alerts, but in these cases it is due to the lack of hygiene of the company.



CONCLUSIONS

- *Listeria monocytogenes* is a problem that historically has been undervalued and underdiagnosed. In the upcoming years, the European authorities will have to face it, as we have noticed, the alerts are constant.
- Companies work daily, under the administration supervision, to avoid these situations. On the other hand, once the alert is triggered, both parties must work together to have the least possible impact on the population.
- The case of Ohian Txiki was solved efficiently, partly due to the low volume distributed and partly due to the good traceability of its products that the company proved to have. Thanks to this, we can not speak of an outbreak of listeriosis, since there was only one case.